

VZCZCXRO6657
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHDIR RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #1187 1251609
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 051609Z MAY 09
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2944
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

S E C R E T BAGHDAD 001187

NOFORN
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/I, NEA/IR AND SAGSWA
NSC STAFF FOR OLLIVANT AND MAGSAMEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/04/2019
TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: IRAQI MFA CONDEMNS REPORTED IRANIAN ATTACKS
AGAINST KURDISH VILLAGES

REF: BAGHDAD 515

Classified by Minister-Counselor for Political Military
Affairs Michael Corbin for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S/NF) Summary: In response to reports of Iranian cross-border attacks in Iraqi Kurdistan, the Iraqi MFA summoned Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad Hassan Kazemi-Qomi on May 4 to demand a halt to the attacks and threaten "severe negative consequences" if they continue. According to unconfirmed press reports, Iran shelled a Kurdish village on May 4, while witnesses claimed that on May 2, Iran launched artillery, helicopter, and fixed-wing attacks against three villages. However, U.S. military analysts have no confirmation of what, if anything, actually happened in the attacks, the latest confrontation between Iran and the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK) on the Iraq-Iran border. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Taha Mahmoud al-Abbasi, head of the Iraqi MFA's neighboring countries' department, summoned Iranian Ambassador Qomi on May 4 to deliver a note condemning reported Iranian attacks on Iraqi villages and threatening "severe negative consequences for relations between the two countries" if the attacks continue, according to an MFA public statement. The statement accused Iran of bombing Iraqi border villages with aircraft, helicopters and artillery, wounding "many" residents of the villages and causing substantial property damage. (Note: Kurdish and Arab press did not report any casualties.) Abbasi told Qomi that Iraq understands Iran's needs to control the border but emphasized that it should not take unilateral actions, according to the MFA statement.

¶3. (S/NF) Since 2004, the PJAK has routinely conducted attacks on Iranian military forces, killing an average of two Iranian soldiers a month, according to U.S. military analysts in Multinational Division-North. Iran has responded with artillery strikes several times a month. In early January 2009, Iran threatened the terrorist organization Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which is based in northern Iraq and launches attacks into Turkey, that it would face military consequences if it did not order PJAK forces to leave Iran. Between April 19 and April 26, the PJAK clashed with Iranian security forces in the Iranian province of Kermanshah, which borders Iraq and is home to many of Iran's minority Kurds. Various press accounts reported that about 25 Iranian police and PJAK members were killed in these clashes, although the reported number of casualties varied. The Assembly of Communities of Kurdistan Executive Council called on the PJAK to stop the attacks on April 26.

¶4. (S/NF) On May 2, Kurdish press accounts quoted an unnamed Iraqi border guard official who claimed that Iran launched artillery and helicopter strikes on villages in the Panjwin

district near Sulaymaniyah. Arab satellite television broadcasts included reports of witnesses that Iranian jet fighters attacked the border villages. The following day, the Kurdistan Region Council of Ministers' Presidency released a statement calling on Iran to stop bombarding the region's border areas. Mahma Khalil, a Kurdish member of the Iraqi Council of Representatives, was quoted in Kurdish media on May 4 criticizing the federal government for its silence on the issue and demanding that Iraq's neighbors respect its sovereignty. Iran launched another artillery attack on a Kurdish village the same day, according to press reports.

15. (S/NF) Comment: While we have been unable to confirm
Q5. (S/NF) Comment: While we have been unable to confirm whether the attacks in the remote, mountainous region involved artillery, helicopters or airplanes -- or confirm any other details of the often-unreliable press accounts -- the facts of the issue are now less important than the GOI response to the reports. In the past, the GOI has declined to publicly criticize Iran over violations of Iraqi sovereignty such as the February flight of an Iranian unmanned aerial vehicle shot down by U.S. forces over Iraq (reftel). While PM Maliki is out of the country and FM Hoshyar Zebari, a Kurd, is known for free-lancing, we suspect this posture does reflect the Prime Minister's feelings about Iraqi sovereignty. We will watch with interest whether Maliki is willing to take a public stand on such issues following his return from a trip abroad.
HILL